



## First National Conference on Evaluation in Public Health

✱ Consciously or subconsciously evaluation is an inseparable part of human life and one of the characteristics that distinguishes the behavior of the celebrating homo sapiens from the instinct-guided, reflex-conditioned behavior of the lower forms of animal life. Objective, critical, self-evaluation is said to be a hallmark of the emotionally mature adult.

Evaluation is not new in public health. It predates Lemuel Shattuck's report and probably also predates biblical references to public health. One cannot plan or administer a public health program properly without evaluating it; thus one of the primary objectives of the Committee on Administrative Practice of the American Public Health Association is the evaluation of administrative procedures. Although evaluation is not new, methods and tools of measurement change as do attitudes toward, and emphasis on, evaluation. Thus it is timely in an age when we can measure the energy released by synthetic nuclear fusion to renew our efforts at measuring the accomplishments of our public health programs.

It is against this background that we welcome and salute the First National Conference on Evaluation in Public Health held at the University of Michigan School of Public Health at Ann Arbor last September 12th and 13th.

Developing as a result of a resolution by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers in 1953, this conference was sponsored by the American Public Health Association, the Association of Business Management in Public Health, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers, the Children's Bureau and the Public Health Service of the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, in cooperation with the School of Public Health of the University of Michigan. It assembled under one roof scores of outstanding persons in the various public health professions, most of whom had demonstrated special competence in the field of public health evaluation. They included persons from areas scattered from Ottawa to Louisiana and from the east coast to the far west of the United States. All told, 112 persons expended the time and funds to attend this conclave. The conference included members or directors of many of the prominent state and local health departments, as well as persons from national, official and voluntary public health agencies and from several schools of public health and medical schools.

The assembly was well organized and run in such a fashion that each of the participants had occasion to enter into active discussion through one of five con-

current subgroups. The planning committee had arranged in advance to furnish the moderator and discussion leaders of each of these groups with a common outline that would serve as a uniform frame of reference. This outline attempted to form a structural common denominator into which one could place the basic items of program objectives and program procedures, as well as methods of evaluation of both the objectives and the procedures.

Five sample public health "programs" were selected to illustrate the possible use of such a framework and to serve as a discussion base to work out the over-all scheme and to afford a jumping off point for future recommendations in the field of program planning and evaluation. The sample programs selected were accident prevention, cancer control, fluoridation, premature care and tuberculosis control. After two days and two nights of formal and informal deliberations, a plenary session was held at which a summary of the discussions was aired and recommendations considered for future action.

Four specific recommendations eventuated and were unanimously adopted. They were:

1. That a committee be appointed to develop uniform terminology and nomenclature for use in discussing and planning evaluation procedures.
2. That persons associated with each of the agencies present at the conference plan to evaluate at least one aspect of their programs or objectives during the coming year.
3. That a second conference be held about a year after the first at which one of the functions should be a summary of reports on the evaluation projects carried on as a result of the second recommendation above.
4. That a national clearing house and repository of information for evaluation in public health should be established under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Administrative Practice of the American Public Health Association.

We believe this conference represents an excellent additional step along the road to objective and comparable evaluation. Too much of what has passed for evaluation in the past has been subjective and insufficiently documented to permit comparison with other programs elsewhere, or even with the same program at different times. We congratulate the planning committee, the University of Michigan School of Public Health, and the participants in the First National Conference on Evaluation in Public Health on what we believe is a firm and noteworthy step in the right direction.

## The Geneva Conference on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy

✻ International conferences are so characteristic of our times that one more may stir up little or no excitement, except for the fact that the August, 1955, Geneva conference dealt for the first time in history with atomic energy. The magic words "atomic energy" distinguish this meeting from any other previously held, because a tense world dramatically fears and hopes to benefit from the revolutionary possibilities of the great discoveries of the mid-twentieth century.

This conference had especial significance in that over 70 countries participated; that political implications were nonexistent; that technical promises for the future in medicine, biology, and industry were elaborated for a peaceful use; that almost